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## **China: Hold independent inquiry into 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown**

Chinese authorities should hold an open and independent inquiry into the 1989 violent military crackdown on peaceful demonstrators in and around Tiananmen Square, Amnesty International said today.

The Chinese government has thwarted any attempts to shed light on the military crackdown that resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries in June 1989. In the lead up to the twentieth anniversary of the protests, the authorities have even intensified a current crackdown on activists and lawyers.

The Chinese government has not made official figures public, but several non-governmental organizations estimate that at least 20 and maybe as many as 200 individuals remain in detention for their involvement in the 1989 pro-democracy protests.

“The National People’s Congress has within its powers the ability to lead the way in calling for an account of all those who died, those who were imprisoned and those who remain in prison still as a result of the crackdown,” said Amnesty International in an open letter sent to Wu Bangguo, the Chairman of the National People’s Congress of China, on 13 May 2009.

“A number of people who remain in prison were convicted of ‘counter revolutionary’ crimes that were removed from the Chinese Criminal Code in 1997,” said Roseann Rife, Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific Deputy Director. “The Chinese authorities should immediately release these prisoners as a first step towards accountability.”

Not all of those who have been imprisoned for their association with the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement actually participated in the protests 20 years ago. The Chinese authorities’ ongoing suppression of public discussion of the events means that many have been sentenced to imprisonment after 1989 simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression, for example, by hosting online discussions or posting poems commemorating the crackdown on the Internet.

Imprisonment is not the only method that the Chinese authorities use to stifle public debate of the 1989 events. The prominent leaders of the Tiananmen Mothers group, Ding Zilin and Jiang Peikun are frequently subjected to police harassment and arbitrary detention.. In May they were forbidden from attending a mourning ceremony that 50 other members of the group were allowed to attend, after they promised the

Ministry of State Security that no outsiders, especially journalists, present in the gathering. At the launch of the Amnesty International Annual Report, Amnesty International Secretary General Irene Khan called on China to sign and ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Although the Chinese government's recent initiative in launching the National Human Rights Action Plan, which has provisions to eradicate unlawful detention and protect human rights guaranteed in the Chinese Constitution, was welcomed by Amnesty International, the Plan's success hinges on the actual implementation.

"In the midst of a global economic downturn, the Chinese government has demonstrated its readiness to take up leadership in stabilizing the world economic system. When it comes to the protection of human rights, however, the Chinese government has consistently failed to live up to the world's expectations. The number of people still in prison for their actions in Tiananmen Square twenty years ago is testament to the lack of commitment to human rights that still prevails in China," said Roseann Rife.

### **Case updates:**

As the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown approaches, Chinese authorities have intensified the suppression of human rights activists across the country. Amnesty International has documented at least one hundred cases of activists who have been detained briefly or faced violence from authorities in 2009 as they defended land rights, housing rights and labour rights and signatories of the Charter 08, a petition calling for legal and political reforms, continue to face questioning. Several of these cases are related to the surveillance of activists ahead of the anniversary.

In the first four months of 2009, Amnesty International documented at least four cases of lawyers who were threatened with violence by the authorities as they defended their clients, at least ten cases where lawyers were hindered from meeting or representing clients, and at least one case in which a lawyer has been detained for doing his work. Lawyers recently have been threatened with denial of the licenses in retaliation for their work on rights defence cases.

To follow are details of several individuals detained in connection with the 1989 protests who are scheduled to be released from prison in the coming years:

**Jiang Yaqun** was in his forties at the time of his arrest. He was originally sentenced to a suspended death sentence for 'counter-revolutionary sabotage'. After receiving three sentence reductions, he is scheduled for release from Beijing's Jinzhong Prison in October 2014.

**Li Yujun** was originally sentenced to death with a 2-year reprieve for arson, and is detained in Beijing No. 2 Prison. After six sentence reductions, Li is due for release in November 2014.

**Zhu Gengsheng** was also convicted of 'counter-revolutionary sabotage' because he waved a flag while shouting "We win!" on a tank that was set on fire. Zhu was originally sentenced to death with a 2-year reprieve, and is currently jailed at Beijing No. 2 Prison. He has received five sentence reductions, and his scheduled release is due in April 2013.

The following individuals continue to be persecuted by the Chinese authorities for their human rights activism in connection with the Tiananmen pro-democracy movement

**Huang Qi**, was sentenced to five-years' imprisonment for hosting an online discussion about the protests in Tiananmen Square. The 'evidence' against him included reference to an Amnesty International document about the Tiananmen crackdown which had been posted on his web-site. He was released on 4 June 2005. Following his release, he continued to maintain his website and his human rights work and was detained again in June 2008, apparently for his assistance to five families whose children died in the Sichuan Earthquake last year.

**Qi Zhiyong**, who was left disabled by a gunshot injury during the 1989 Tiananmen violence, told reporters in a text message on 15 April that he had been detained by the police. It is believed that his detention is associated with the 20th anniversary of the death of Hu Yaobang. Hu's death marked the beginning of the pro-democracy protests.

**Zhou Yongjun**, an exiled student leader of the 1989 pro-democracy protests, offers yet another example of arbitrary detention. Zhou Yongjun was sentenced to two-years' imprisonment for his involvement in the 1989 pro-democracy protests. When he was released, he was exiled to the United States. He returned to China in 1998 when he was sent to Re-education Through Labour for another three years. In a recent attempt to re-enter China via Hong Kong last October, he was again detained by the Chinese authorities in Shenzhen. According to his sister, the Chinese authorities denied any repeated detention of Zhou Yongjun. However, international media including the Associated Press reported in May 2009, that Zhou Yongjun had been formally charged with fraud.